SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

619 THE social organization of the Blackfeet is very simple. The three tribes acknowledged a blood relationship with each other, and, while distinct, still considered themselves a nation. In this confederation, it was understood that there [579] should be no war against each other. However, between 1860 and 1870, when the whiskey trade was in its height, [578] the three tribes were several times at swords' points on account of drunken brawls. Once, about sixty or seventy years ago, the Bloods and Piegans had a quarrel so serious that men were killed on both sides and horses stolen; yet this was hardly a real war, for only a part of each tribe was involved, and the trouble was not of long duration.

614 Each one of the Blackfoot tribes is subdivided into gentes, a gens being a body of consanguineal kindred in the male line. It is noteworthy that the Blackfeet, although Algonquins, have this system of subdivision, and it may be that among them the gentes are of comparatively recent date. No special duties are assigned to any one gens, nor has any gens, so far as I know, any special "medicine" or "totem."

Below is a list of the gentes of each tribe.

BLACKFEET (*Sik'-si-kau*)

Gentes:

Puh-ksi-nah'-mah-yiks	Flat Bows.
Mo-tah'-tos-iks	Many Medicines.
Siks-in'-o-kaks	Black Elks.
E'-mi-tah-pahk-sai-yiks	Dogs Naked.
Sai'-yiks	Liars.

5: Grinnell Q,T-5 (ca.1888) 1962
NF6 Blackfoot NF6

piles to await the coming of spring. The disease spread from tribe to tribe, and finally reached the Blackfeet. It is said by whites who were in the country at the time, that this small-pox almost swept the Plains bare of Indians.

In the winter of 1857–58, small-pox again carried off great numbers, but the mortality was not to be compared with that of 1845. In 1864, measles ran through all the Blackfoot camps, and was very fatal, and again in 1869 they had the small-pox.

Between the years 1860 and 1875, a great deal of whiskey was traded to the Blackfeet. Having once experienced the delights of intoxication, the Indians were eager for liquor, and the traders found that robes and furs could be bought to better advantage for whiskey than for anything else. To be sure, the personal risk to the trader was considerably increased by the sale of whiskey, for when drunk the Indians fought like demons among themselves or with the traders. But, on the other hand, whiskey for trading to Indians cost but a trifle, and could be worked up, and then diluted, so that a little would go a long way.

As a measure of partial self-protection, the traders used to deal out the liquor from the keg or barrel in a tin scoop so constructed that it would not stand on a flat surface, so that an Indian, who was drinking, had to keep the vessel in his hand until the liquor was consumed, or else it would be spilled and lost. This lessened the danger of any shooting or stabbing while the Indian was drinking, and an effort was usually made to get him out of the store as soon as he had finished. Nevertheless, drunken fights in the trading-stores were of common occurrence, and the life of a whiskey-trader was one of constant peril. I have talked with many men who were engaged in this traffic, and some of the stories they tell are thrilling. It was a common thing in winter for the man who unbarred and opened the store in the morning to have a dead Indian fall into his arms as the door swung

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

bers of their sturdy young people, and when they were thoroughly shaken by the massacre on the Marias, it took but little more to demoralize the Blackfeet completely. That little was a ready supply of "white men's water" with which to drown their sorrows.

Exploiting the Indians' well-known weakness for liquor, the American traders used it as their primary lure to bring the red men flocking to their posts with buffalo robes, furs, horses, and women. To make their beverage even more attractive, the Americans mixed their alcohol not only with the usual branch water, but also with black chewing tobacco, red peppers, Jamaica ginger, black molasses, and other strong substances. Twenty cupfuls of this hot Indian whisky sometimes was given for a fine head and tail robe, three gallons for a good lively horse, and still more for an attractive Indian girl whose charms appealed to one of the traders. The Indians were warned not to drink the stuff near the fort. Some of them froze to death before they reached their lodges. In their camps drunken Indians quarreled and killed one another. Eighty-eight Northern Blackfeet were said to have been killed in drunken brawls in 1871.[9] In a brief period two years later, thirty-two of the Piegans, including two prominent chiefs, were killed.[10] Rev. John McDougall, a missionary, claimed that forty-two able-bodied Northern Blackfoot men lost their lives in shootings, stabbings, or by freezing to death following drunken rows in the winter of 1873–74.[11] Sometimes the Indians played a macabre joke on the traders by propping the frozen body of a dead comrade against the fort gate so that when the whites opened it in the morning, the stiffened corpse would fall on them.

There are no complete records of the number of Indian deaths caused by "white men's water" in the period 1869–74. But the Blackfoot agent in Montana estimated that six hundred barrels of liquor were used in the Blackfoot trade in 1873, and that in

[9] MacInnes, *In the Shadow of the Rockies*, 75.
[10] Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1873, 252.
[11] John McDougall, *On Western Trails in the Early Seventies*, 129.

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

[ca. 1860-1875]

the treatment of his "children." "To take from peaceable, friendly Indians a very large portion of their best hunting and pasture land without consultation or remuneration, is a violation of the wise and Christian policy of the Government."[35]

By an act of Congress of April 15, 1874, the reservation boundary was officially moved northward to the Birch Creek–Marias River line. But Agent May made no effort to remove his agency from the Teton northward to some locality on the reservation. His stubborn championing of the rights of the Indians ended with his removal from office the following January.

May's successor, John Wood, fresh from a period of service as city marshal of Ottumwa, Iowa, brought to his new job an enthusiasm for law and order that soon was reflected in his relations with the Blackfeet. Wood found the Indians leaderless and demoralized. During the preceding year, fifteen to twenty men, including five chiefs, had been killed near the agency as the result of quarrels induced by too liberal use of whisky. The success of the Mounted Police in Canada had driven the whisky traders southward to Montana, where they operated in apparent collaboration with the licensed Blackfoot traders. Among the Indians killed had been the head chief of the Piegans. Agent May had appointed a successor to this chief, but the majority of the Indians refused to recognize him. They wanted to choose their own chief.[36]

One of Wood's first acts was to call in the scattered hunting bands. When more than five thousand Indians had gathered around the agency, he began to urge them to organize, elect head chiefs, and adopt laws for their tribal government. He warned them that unless they changed their habits, they would become extinct in a few years. After five days of talks with the Indians, Wood convened a council on April 20, 1875, to elect chiefs and to make laws. He called upon the Indians to elect a head chief who did not drink and who would care for and control his

[35] Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1874, 260.

[36] John Wood to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, February 2 and February 11, 1875, Indian Office Records.

10: Lewis E-4 (no date) 1973 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

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completely cowed the Piegan. If any resistance on their part had been contemplated, it never materialized. As Curtis wrote:

> "A study of the Piegan conflict with the white people, either citizens or soldiers, shows that, considering their number and their provocation, they were one of the most harmless tribes."[20]

Canada

It was not until after 1870 that the Blackfoot felt the force of white expansion in Canada. Blackfoot country had remained free from settlers. The North Saskatchewan, the main highway of traffic to the northwest, was north of Blackfoot country. So long as the Hudson's Bay Company retained its trade monopoly, the Blackfoot were free to continue their old life. But the days of the company were limited. In response to an increasing pressure for a national policy to deal with the growing westward expansion and immigration, Alberta and Saskatchewan were ceded to the Canadian government by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1870.

With the passing of political authority of the Hudson's Bay Company, there came an end to the harmonious relations with the Blackfoot in Canada. A period of free trade now set in.

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> "New and reprehensible practises in trade were introduced. Competition was keen. Trader outbid trader and upset the century old values fixed by the Hudson Bay Company. Alcoholic spirits, long discontinued by the company . . . for many years now poured in from Red River and from across the border. In southern Alberta, American whiskey runners from Montana introduced the lawless spirit of the American frontier. Contemptuous of Canadian authority, they built forts in Canadian territory, and debauched the Indians with alcohol."[21]

In 1872, Colonel Ross was sent west by the Canadian government to investigate. In his report he recommended that police be sent to put down the liquor trade:

[579]

> "The demoralization of the Indians and injury resulting to the country from this illicit traffic are very great. It is stated upon good authority that during last year (1871) eighty-eight (88) of the Blackfoot Indians were murdered in drunken brawls amongst themselves, produced by the whiskey and other spirits supplied to them by the traders. At Fort Edmonton during the present summer whiskey was openly sold to the Blackfoot . . . by some smugglers from the U.S. . . .".[22]

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In the same year, John McDougall, a missionary, visited the Blood, promising that the whites would soon bring law and order. He later arranged to meet Crowfoot, head chief of the Siksika, and told him that the

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[20] E. S. Curtis, *The North American Indian*, Vol. 6, p. 7.
[21] Stanley, *op. cit.*, p. 199.
[22] Stanley, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

11: Goldfrank E-4,5 (1939) 1966 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Blood

181 Two records from Henry's Journal illustrate Blackfoot violence and 579 aggressiveness:

157 [684] They (Blood) informed us of a quarrel between Painted Feathers band and the Cold band caused by a woman who had been debauched by the latter. . .four of the [628] party were wounded, and the woman shot in the leg.[59]

[682] He [a Blackfoot] was a notorious scoundrel, who had murdered three of his own countrymen.[60]

[684] And some twenty years later, Maximilian learns from an Indian whom [837] he meets:

. . .that an Indian had run away with his sister, the wife of a third person, and they had ridden out to look for him in order to shoot him.[61]

And in another passage, he states:

[682] He (White Buffalo) had lately shot his sister, because she kept up an intercourse with a man against whom he had advised her. A chief of the Blackfeet with whom he had a quarrel shot him through the thigh; he, however, did not lose his presence of mind, and killed his enemy, notwithstanding his wound.[62]

578 The remaining cases, taken from winter counts and recent anthropo-157 logical field notes, deal specifically with the subjects of this paper, "the 682 vicious . . . and turbulent" Blood:

South of the Missouri, the Blood fought among themselves. . . .[63]

In the summer the Blood camped at Yellow Mountains and fought among themselves. Calf Shirt killed some of his own men.[64]

[628] Two Blood chiefs who had trouble with one another, killed each other, Hind Bull and Fish Child.[65]

Shot Bull Back Fat, a Blood, killed another Blood, Eagle Tail Feather Chief.[66]

[621] Big Snake was the Chief of Many-Children Band. He had many wives and children and the strong men in his band were envious of him. Mad Wolf tried to kill him.

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[59] Henry and Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 572.
[60] *Ibid.*, p. 543.
[61] Maximilian, *op. cit.*, p. 268.
[62] *Ibid.*, p. 272.
[63] Wissler, *Social Life*, p. 46. From Elk Horn's winter count, some time around the year 1855.
[64] *Ibid.*, p. 49. From Big Brave's winter count, presumably a few years later.
[65] From the winter count of Percy Creighton, for the year 1859.
[66] *Ibid.*, for the year 1868.

11: Goldfrank E-4,5 (1939) 1966 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Blood

our younger brother, Not Real Good, that I will do as he asks. But don't let things like this happen again. If they should, although I am a woman, I will do as I wish.

A last story is taken from Biele's notes:

[579] One night two brothers, relatives of Red Crow, visited him in his tipi. The chief was smoking and after his guests were seated, one on either side of him, he offered his pipe, the customary gesture of hospitality. The first brother refused to smoke. Signifying his anger, he pointed the stem at Red Crow. The other brother then rose, took aim and fired at the chief. The bullet missed him but hit his wife, Water Bird, in the shoulder. Red Crow then shot and killed his assailant while the second brother, though wounded, escaped into the darkness.

"Everyone," comments Henry, "that has lived a wicked life on earth, committed murder in his own nation, or been guilty of suicide, must pass by a different route to the Elysian fields."[70] But neither certainty of an uneasy immortality, nor cooperative mechanisms, nor informal pressures succeeded in outlawing intratribal killing among the competitive and violent Blood in the Buffalo days.[71] Nor did sixty years' confinement on a reservation, nor the threat of the white man's law fundamentally alter the personality structure developed in that early period.

III. Blood Economy and Social Change in the Reserve Period*

Two vital factors acted upon Blood society simultaneously. In 1877, Treaty No. 7 was signed with the Blackfoot tribes in Canada restricting them to a reserve, and in 1878, the winter count of a Blood reads, "This was the year the buffalo went out of sight."[72]

Both the Blood and the Canadian Government were fortunate in the

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[70] Henry and Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 529.

[71] Ruth Benedict in discussing Jules Henry's paper, *Some Cultural Determinants of Hostility in Pilaga Indian Children*, p. 120) writes: "The indication of cross-cultural studies is that minimal interpersonal hostility also is correlated with certain cultural institutions, political and economic, as well as forms of the family and methods of child rearing." Comparatively, for external threat as a cooperative mechanism, see Esther S. Goldfrank, *Historic Change and Social Character, a Study of Teton Dakota*, p. 78 ff., for informal pressures, see Karl L. Llewellyn and E. Adamson Hoebel, *The Cheyenne Way*, Chapter 9.

* The years given in the footnotes in this section refer to the *Annual Reports on Indian Affairs* contained in the *Sessional Papers of the Dominion of Canada*. From 1873–1880, these are listed under the Department of the Interior; later reports were issued by the Department of Indian Affairs. From 1930 on, they appear separately. All names used in this monograph, except those from published sources are fictitious.

[72] Percy Creighton's winter count.

11: Goldfrank E-4,5 (1939) 1966 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Blood

tion are not uncommon. It may be that a quick adaptability when the game is worth the candle assures a reasonable stability in this brittle society.

Children and Adults

Quoting Harmon in his Journal, Henry writes: "To see a house full of drunken Indians, consisting of men, women, and children, is a most unpleasant sight, for in that condition they often wrangle, pull each other by the hair, and fight. At some times ten or twelve, of both sexes, may be seen fighting each other promiscuously, until at last, they all fall on the floor. . . . To add to this uproar, a number of children, some on their mother's shoulders, and others running about and taking hold of their clothes, are constantly bawling, the elder ones, through fear that their parents may be stabbed, or that some misfortune may befall them in the fray."[196]

In 1939, we were the unwilling observers of a no less disturbing scene. Early on a clear moonlight night in August, loud shouts rent the air. Silhouetted against the canvas of the only tent in view, were the struggling figures of two men, the brothers Pointed Plume. Since their father's separation from his wife of more than twenty years, their loyalties had been engaged on opposite sides. Argument between them was frequent. This time, the fight, abetted by drink, grew wild and noisy. Pushing through the flap, the brothers tumbled into the open. The tug-of-war continued. Someone tried to start the car; doors banged; glass crashed. The young mothers holding tightly to their babes cried out; the older children shrieked in terror. The fight continued, this time again inside the tent. Finally, physical restraint (one brother was tied up with the able assistance of a brother-in-law) and exhaustion brought peace shortly after midnight.

By morning the car was gone. At seven, the little Pointed Plume girls, nine, and eleven, were industriously and silently removing broken glass, the only evidence of the previous night's hostilities. At eight, the family went off to the river for a quiet picnic.

In many respects, present-day conditions differ radically from those of Harmon's time: agriculture and herding have replaced hunting and food-gathering; living is sedentary and dwellings are scattered. Yet the basic individualism and unpredictable tempers that characterised the Blood a century and a half ago are still apparent today. And children are still exposed to conflict and violence.

Two young daughters of this same family were present when their grandfather beat up his new wife; his adopted "favorite" had witnessed his domestic differences with his old one. Several youngsters stood beside us

[196] Henry and Thompson, *Journals*, footnote 21, Vol. 2, p. 575.

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from being wet. Take the children out. Go someplace so I can sleep. So they built a fire and laid some bigger wood on top. A half-dried wood was laid right on top. The women went out and they weighed down the door flap with a log so that nobody would go in, knowing that the door was shut.

As he was dozing off, he heard a voice singing. After a moment he heard it again and sat up. He saw the fire was burning low, so he raked up the fireplace and rekindled it. There was a lot of half-dried wood that was not yet burned and he pushed it into the fire. Then he lay down, facing the wall as before. Again, he heard the voice singing. There were words in the song, but he didn't get the words. He sat up and listened, but when he looked about, no one was singing. He opened the door slightly and looked out, but no one was there, either. He went back and raked all the unburned wood into the fire and as he lay down the voice sang. This time he could make out the words. He had never heard the song before. "My Pipe is holy. My Pipe hears me. My Pipe is my Medicine."

The voice was singing in the fireplace, so he sat up and looked at the fireplace. The voice sang, "My Pipe I give you. My Pipe I now give you."

As he looked, a Worm stuck its head out from the half-dried wood. Worm was wiggling because the fire was burning the wood toward where he was. "This is the one that is singing," the man said to himself.

After a while, Worm said to the man, "I am giving you my Pipe." The man replied to Worm, "Why are you worried? Nothing is going to happen to you." Then the man picked up the wood with Worm on it and he went out. As it had rained for a considerable time, there was water in hollow places. He doused the wood in the water and went south along the river. When he came to an opening in the forest he found a good spot in a growth of big trees. He stuck the wood into a pile of dead trees and gave the wood

chiefs of the tribe. He was a candidate for head chief in 1883, but, because of his warlike attitudes and his hatred for Whites, he was effectively blocked by the Indian agent. Two years later he attempted to amalgamate the remnants of the Followers of the Buffalo under his leadership, but again the action was not sanctioned. In disgust, White Calf, with a number of his followers, moved to the South Piegan Reservation in Montana in 1891. Although they later returned, the band had become so fractionalized that many of the members joined the neighboring Fish Eaters.

Another Followers of the Buffalo offshoot was the Knife Owners, a small group that had separated during the late nomadic period. At the nucleus of the band was its leader, Chief Standing In The Middle, and his eight sons. On one occasion when he was at a trading post, the leader bought new knives for all his boys and the band name was born. A small group, it remained relatively independent and for a time was part of the ill-fated Orphans band.

The Lone Fighters, one of the bands that was independent of both the Fish Eaters and the Followers of the Buffalo, had two of its leaders, Iron Collar and Calf Shirt, present to sign the 1855 American treaty. According to tradition, the band was named when Iron Collar returned from a successful raid after hearing complaints about squabbling within his band. "You have been calling us quarrellers," he said. "Very well, from now on we shall be known as the Quarrellers or Lone Fighters" (Jim White Bull, 1954, pers. comm.).

After the death of Iron Collar, Calf Shirt became the sole leader of the band during the 1850s and 1860s, after which time he was joined by Many Spotted Horses. Calf Shirt was an influential leader, but under the influence of alcohol he was so uncontrollable that he was nicknamed *Miniksi*, or "wild man." He killed a number of his own people while drunk, but his personal foibles were more than overshadowed by his tactical leadership in war. He was the foremost war chief of the tribe, and in 1865 he led a raid that wiped out the budding town of Ophir, Montana. After

who had ten wives and sixty children.

From the beginning, the Many Children had the reputation of being wild and unmanageable, not in a warrior sense, but in tribal and domestic affairs. The split with the Many Fat Horses occurred when a son-in-law of Not Afraid Of The Gros Ventres became a favorite of Many Spotted Horses and gained the jealousy and ill will of his brothers-in-law. One day, when he went to the Many Children camp, he was attacked by the family and before he was killed he had slain Not Afraid Of The Gross Ventres and two sons.

The ensuing scandal caused the Many Children, now under the leadership of a son named Running Wolf, to become alienated from their fellow Bloods. A year later, they became involved in a dispute with members of the All Tall People band, resulting in a number of deaths on both sides. A trader during that period commented (in Graham, 1956:17):

> At one time they numbered twenty-eight lodges, approximately between fifty and sixty fighting men. A feud broke out between them and another branch of the same tribe and at the time I speak of the [Many Children] had been reduced to two lodges and the survivors had taken refuge in the South Piegan camp.

They remained separated from the Bloods until the extermination of the buffalo forced them to settle on their reservation in 1880. As a result, Running Wolf was not at the Canadian treaty and was not recognized as a chief until a year after he had come home. And even after they were on their reservation, the Many Children were an unruly lot. "They were a wild bunch," said one informant (Harry Mills, 1953, pers. comm.), "and gradually they all got killed off, mostly by the Bloods themselves." "Even today," said another (Goldfrank, 1939), "the women in the Many Children band are like men and want their own way in everything. You can't tell them anything. They are wild and run with many men."

The Marrows, also a Followers of the Buffalo offshoot, was named because of their fondness for buffalo marrow. The only known leader was White Calf, who was also one of the leading war

[P.102-B]